

CALVERT COUNTY



Selection of Focus Area

Five focus groups were conducted with broad-based community representation. Preventing teenage pregnancy initially surfaced as a substantial issue, but was considered too controversial for many. Therefore, the scope was broadened to encompass all adolescent health issues.

Related Focus Issues:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------------|
| 1. Tobacco | 5. Physical Activity |
| 2. Alcohol | 6. Violence |
| 3. Drugs | 7. Reckless Driving |
| 4. Nutrition | |

DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

Estimated Population, by Race – 1998

Total	71,870
White	78.4%
Other	21.6%

Estimated Population, by Age – 1998

Under 1	920	18-44	29,560
1-4	4,070	45-64	15,150
5-17	15,450	65+	6,720

All causes Mortality Rate (age-adjusted, per 100,000 population) 1996-1998 446.2

Infant Mortality Rate 1995-1999 6.3

Estimated Mean Household Income – 1999 \$69,300

Estimated Median Household Income – 1999 \$60,000

Civilian Unemployment Rate, Annual Average – 1999 2.6

Labor force (Top 4) – 1995

State and Local Government	2,200	Government (Federal, Military)	2,700
Retail Trade	4,600	Construction	2,500

Sources: Maryland Vital Statistics, 1999
Maryland Department of Planning, 1995, 1998, 1999

Promoting Adolescent Health

Definition

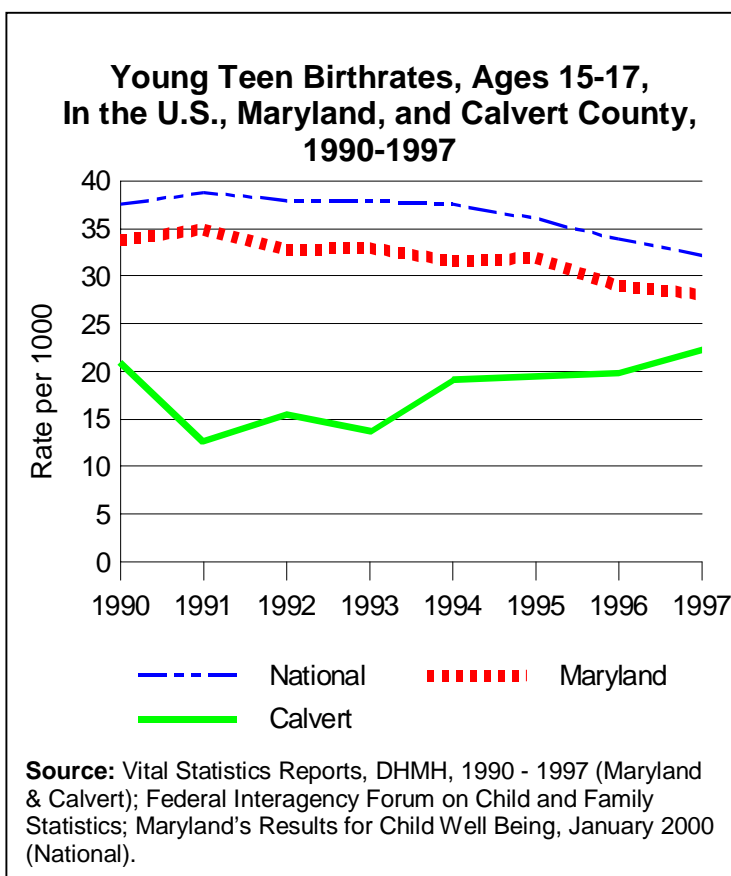
Adolescent Health refers to both the mental and physical well-being of our adolescent population. It is determined by a number of factors, but our focus is social behaviors.

Problem

In recent years the highest priority of the Calvert County Health Department has been to assure that all children enter school ready to learn. Accordingly, we have emphasized early childhood development and preventive services for preschoolers. In so doing we have neglected adolescent health in spite of the obvious fact that more than ever teens are making choices detrimental to health. We note that in Calvert County the young teen (15 to 17 years) birth rate has increased by 75% from 1991 to 1997, an upward trend that is contrary to the downward trend that characterizes the rest of Maryland and the Nation. In addition, 15% of young female teenagers residing in Calvert County utilized the health department's family planning clinic in FY 99.

The health department is in a position to directly address this sensitive aspect of adolescent behavior. The department has a unique responsibility to act with the aim of reversing these upward trends, to reduce young teen births to a level that at least matches the lowest in our state, as well as to decrease the need for family planning services by this very young population.

The consequences of unintended pregnancies among young teen girls are many and serious for the community and affected families. For the young teen girl, motherhood results in reduced educational and employment opportunities, increased likelihood of welfare dependency, and poorer health and developmental outcomes. Infants born to teenage mothers are more likely to suffer low birth weight, neonatal mortality, and sudden infant death syndrome, and they may be at greater risk for child abuse, neglect, and behavioral and educational problems later in life. Daughters of teenage mothers are 83% more likely to become pregnant while a teenager, thus perpetuating and compounding a societal problem. Ideally, there will be no births to young teenagers in Calvert County.



Determinants

We believe that promoting healthy choices for all young teenagers and encouraging the avoidance of risky behaviors will clearly benefit all adolescents as well as the entire community. The substitution of long-term goal-directed behavior in place of the impulsive seeking of instant gratification will better prepare teenagers for entry into adulthood. In that vein, abstinence from sexual intercourse is the healthiest choice for all young teens. A birth to a young teen is almost always the result of a pregnancy that is unintended, an unforeseen mishap that in turn results from a complex mix of risky behaviors and unhealthy choices by both young boys and girls. A young teen becoming pregnant is the iceberg tip of a host of underlying health-related behaviors that are problematic for many adolescents, including impulsive acts, alcohol abuse, illicit drug use, bad eating habits, lack of physical activity, violence, reckless driving, and tobacco use. Significant outcome measures of such a redirection of adolescent energies will be a reduction in births to young teens as well as a decrease in the number of young teens seeking family planning services from the health department.

Objective 1 - By promoting abstinence, reduce the proportion of females aged 15 to 17 who seek our family planning clinic services from 15% in 1999 to 10% by 2010.

Objective 2 - Reduce the number of pregnancy tests that are positive at the health department among young teens from 56 in 1999 to 42 by 2010.

Objective 3 - Reduce the percentage of births to adolescents under 18 years of age from 3.4% in 1998 to 1.3% by 2010.

Action Steps

- ⇒ Target all boys and girls (10-18) for life skills training to include: responsible interpersonal relationships, appropriate behavior, conflict resolution, harm reduction, etc.
- ⇒ Engage community support to implement a data collection survey of youth behaviors in Calvert County.
- ⇒ Promote healthy lifestyle choices for all boys and girls to include nutrition, physical activity, educational priorities, and psycho-social behavior.
- ⇒ Ensure all parents receive information and educational materials regarding family life and child development. Offer programs for parents to enable them to communicate with their children about responsible behaviors.
- ⇒ Collect reports from partnering agencies regarding actions taken and results achieved. Recognize and publicize these efforts. Expand collaboration with additional agencies.

- ⇒ Promote abstinence of sexual intercourse for all adolescents under the age of 18.
- ⇒ Encourage the implementation of after school programs for upper elementary and middle school youth.
- ⇒ Utilize the resources of the Calvert County Coalition on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention.
- ⇒ Use teenage mothers and fathers as a resource to gather information about adolescent pregnancy issues and to educate other teens about premature parenting.

Partners

Calvert County Coalition Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention • Calvert County Department of Social Services • Calvert County Health Department • Calvert County Public Schools • Calvert Crusade for Children • Calvert Memorial Hospital • Covenant Christian Fellowship • League of Women Voters of Calvert County • Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice • Office of Maternal Health & Family Planning, DHMH

References

Alan Guttmacher Institute, The. (1994). *Sex and America's teenagers*. New York: The Alan Guttmacher Institute.

Brown, Sarah S., & Eisenberg, Leon (Eds.). (1994). *The best intentions: Unintended pregnancy and the well-being of children and families*. Report for the Committee on Unintended Pregnancy, Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, Institute of Medicine. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Maynard, Rebecca A. (Ed.). (1996). *Kids having kids: A Robin Hood Foundation special report on the costs of adolescent childbearing*. New York: The Robin Hood Foundation.

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